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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH PRIORITY 0136

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1646

UNCLAS PHNOM PENH 000315

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS AND PRM
BANGKOK FOR REFCOORD TIM SCHERER
HO CHI MINH CITY FOR TIM SWANSON
GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREF CB VM

SUBJECT: QUIET, SMOOTH CAMBODIAN DEPORTATION OF EIGHT
MONTAGNARDS

REF: 07 PHNOM PENH 1458

¶1. (SBU) Eight Montagnard Vietnamese citizens departed a UNHCR site in Phnom Penh by minivan headed for the Cambodia-Vietnam border on April 9, 2008 as part of a forced repatriation. All eight persons came to the UNHCR Cambodia after May 1, the cutoff date for Montagnard arrivals to be considered for U.S. resettlement if UNHCR denied them refugee status. One of the deported individuals was female, seven were male, all were adults.

¶2. (SBU) The early morning deportation went quietly and without incident. Poloff was on site during the departure, along with several UNHCR staff and approximately 10 Ministry of Interior (MOI) Immigration Department officials. There were no media or NGO representatives on site. Poloff could see into the compound when the eight persons prepared to board the vehicle; at least two appeared to be happily saying their goodbyes to other Montagnard individuals and UNHCR staff. As the minivan pulled out of the compound, each one of the deported individuals waved goodbye, many of them smiling. Three MOI officials accompanied the Montagnards to the Vietnamese border, where they were to be turned over to the Vietnamese authorities.

¶3. (SBU) UNHCR staff told poloff that Vietnamese officials will "process" the Montagnards' arrival this afternoon. They will then begin a drive directly to their home provinces in the Central Highlands -- a journey that can take as long as 24 hours. The individuals are therefore expected to arrive in their home villages late in the day on April 10.

¶4. (SBU) This is not the first forced repatriation of Montagnard individuals who arrived in Cambodia after the May 1 cutoff date. During a recent meeting with DCM Piper Campbell and UNHCR Deputy Regional Representative Giuseppe de Vincentis and UNHCR Cambodia Country Representative Thamrongsak Meechubot, Meechubot stated that a deportation of two such individuals had taken place in late February, along with one individual who arrived before May 1 but was departing voluntarily. Given that the post-May 1 arrivals had not been eligible for U.S. review after denied refugee status by the UNHCR, the UNHCR presumed Embassy Phnom Penh would not be interested in the repatriation proceeding. The DCM stressed our continued interest and stated that it would be best if Emboffs continue to be made aware of and monitor the departure proceedings. UNHCR agreed to involve us in all departure proceedings in the future.

MUSSOMELI